

DUPLICATION OF READING MATERIAL IN FIFTEEN SECOND-GRADE READERS

R. E. STONE

Central High School and Junior College
St. Joseph, Missouri

In an article published in a recent issue of the *Elementary School Journal*, Dr. Charles H. Judd, of the University of Chicago, makes the following statement. "Every textbook, whatever its source, has characteristics which can be accurately tabulated and described."¹

Interest in the subject appears to be widespread and various attempts have been made to analyze some of the textbooks in common use. Although this interest has not been confined to school readers it appears fitting that readers be first to receive attention. Mr. Whitney, then of Minneapolis, analyzed the vocabularies of nine first readers,² Superintendent Housh performed a like service for ten second readers,³ and Mr. Vinal has recently surveyed and rather caustically criticized the contents of some thirty first readers.⁴

At the suggestion and with the helpful co-operation of Dr. Clifford E. Woody, of the University of Washington, the writer has undertaken an analysis and classification of the contents of fifteen second-grade readers.

It is hoped that as a result of the studies mentioned and others now being prepared a standard for the measurement of school readers may eventually be forthcoming.

In the writer's analysis six phases of the situation have been quite carefully canvassed. These are: (1) general characteristics; (2) space devoted to literature and to illustrations; (3) forms of

¹ CHARLES H. JUDD, "Analyzing Textbooks," *Elementary School Journal*, XIX (October, 1918), 145.

² FREDERICK L. WHITNEY, "Measuring the Value of First-Grade Readers," *American School Board Journal* (September, 1916).

³ E. T. HOUSH, "Analysis of the Vocabularies of Ten Second-Year Readers," *Seventeenth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, Part I, 40-45.

⁴ W. G. VINAL, "First-Grade Readers," *Nature Study Review*, XIV (December, 1918).

literature; (4) types of literature; (5) classification of selections; (6) duplication of subject-matter. As the last-named phase is considered by many as the most important, the present article deals with the overlapping of material in the fifteen readers studied. These books are from well-known and widely used series and while some have been discarded after trial in various places, they are, nevertheless, considered typical of readers used in all parts of the country. They represent both the method and the content type, the extreme and the conservative, the real and the unreal.

The following list contains the names of the books, the author or authors, the publishers, and dates of publication.¹ No importance attaches to the order of arrangement.

Title	Author	Publisher	Date
<i>Literary Readers</i>	Young and Field	Ginn & Co.	1916
<i>Aldine Readers</i>	Spalding and Bryce	Newson & Co.	1907
<i>Edson-Laing Readers</i>	Edson and Laing	Benj. H. Sanborn & Co.	1916
<i>Progressive Road to Reading</i>	Burchill, Ettinger, and Shimer	Silver, Burdett & Co.	1909
<i>Carroll & Brooks Readers</i>	Carroll and Brooks	D. Appleton & Co.	1912
<i>The Rational Method in Reading</i>	Ward	Silver, Burdett & Co.	1896
<i>Baldwin and Bender</i>	Baldwin and Bender	American Book Co.	1911
<i>Riverside Readers</i>	Van Sickle and Seegmiller	Houghton Mifflin Co.	1911
<i>Elson Readers</i>	Elson	Scott, Foresman & Co.	1913
<i>Classic Readers</i>	Norville and Halliburton	B. F. Johnson & Co.	1901
<i>Golden Treasury</i>	Stebbens and Coolidge	American Book Co.	1909
<i>Beacon Readers</i>	Fassett	Ginn & Co.	1914
<i>Nature & Life</i>	Smith	J. A. Lyons & Co.	1910
<i>Cyr Readers</i>	Cyr	Ginn & Co.	1904
<i>New Education Readers</i>	Demarest and Van Sickle	American Book Co.	1901

It will be noted that exactly twenty years are covered by the period within which these books were produced. While it is generally recognized that this period has witnessed greater changes and developments in our public-school system than any similar period of time, the tenacity with which the oldest book on our list, Ward's *The Rational Method in Reading*, holds its own, causes one to wonder whether there has been, in the twenty and more years since its publication, any great improvement in readers for the primary grades.

¹ Other editions of some of these books exist. A few have been revised. This study deals with those of above dates only.

Before taking up the duplication of subject-matter as revealed by the investigation, it should be understood that very little material found in one reader is the exact counterpart of material contained in another. While such a condition does prevail in regard to the poems of Stevenson, Field, and other modern writings, yet the greater part of the duplicated matter consists of folk tales, fables, myths, legends, etc., which are for the most part adaptations made by or for the various authors and hence differ in length, often in title, and occasionally in the names of the principal characters. In spite of a number of apparent efforts thus to camouflage a tale the child will usually recognize the story if he has previously read it.

TABLE I
NUMBER OF SELECTIONS DUPLICATED IN ANY TWO OF THE FIFTEEN READERS

Names of Books	Literary	Aldine	Edson-Laing	Progressive	Carroll & Brooks	Rational	Baldwin & Bender	Riverside	Elson	Classic	Golden Treasury	Beacon	Nature & Life	Cyr	New Education
Literary	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Aldine	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Edson-Laing	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Progressive	4	0	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Carroll & Brooks	2	0	3	2	6	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Rational	1	1	1	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Baldwin & Bender	2	1	1	2	2	1	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Riverside	2	1	2	0	3	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Elson	4	1	2	1	6	2	5	1	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Classic	0	0	2	1	3	3	5	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Golden Treasury	0	0	3	1	3	6	1	1	2	4	3	3	3	3	3
Beacon	0	2	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0
Nature & Life	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cyr	3	1	3	4	4	6	1	2	2	0	1	2	2	0	0
New Education	21	11	24	17	41	36	33	19	26	36	26	26	11	0	31
Total duplications . . .															

When in doubt on this point the writer submitted such selections to his own child, a voracious reader, asking her if she had read the story anywhere. Invariably she was able to locate the counterpart in a very short time in a reader of the same or another grade.

Superintendents and supervisors of reading everywhere are advocating more reading material. Some schools are even requiring the perusal of a stipulated number of books as a basis for promotion

in the primary grades. How to secure this material without extensive duplication is a serious matter.

The present investigation reveals the fact that it is possible to select companion books with little or no duplications and that it is equally possible to make selections where the overlappings of material may reach as high as twenty or even thirty pages of reading matter in a single book.

Table I presents in a concrete form the extent of the duplications as it exists in the fifteen readers. This table should be read from the left and from the top. Figures standing at the intersections of two columns represent the number of selections common to the two books. For instance, *Aldine* and *Literary* present three selections in common, *Rational* and *Progressive* two, *Beacon* and *Rational* six, *Classic* and *Elson* six, while *Cyr* contains a literature distinctly its own.

Figures at the foot of each column indicate the total number of selections for the book named at the top which are duplicated somewhere in the fourteen other books. *Carroll & Brooks* with forty-one of its sixty-six selections duplicated indicates a wise selection on the part of the authors or a paucity of material from which to make selection.

The real situation, however, in regard to the overlapping of material is not exhibited in Table I, significant as its revelations may appear—for selections vary in length. Some of these duplications are less than one-half page in extent, while in another case a selection common to four of the books occupies a total of thirty-seven pages in a single reader.

Table II presents the findings of the investigation wherein pages and not numbers of duplicated selections are recorded.

Although Table II may appear complicated at first glance the scheme is really quite simple and easily understood. It is evident a selection common to two books may not occupy the same amount of space in each of the books. For instance, one author may devote three pages to a tale which another may easily amplify until it occupies twice the number. Table II is arranged to meet just this situation. Each book is compared to each of the fourteen other books. Thus, in the first horizontal column *Literary* is compared to *Aldine* and each of the others, while in the second horizontal column *Aldine* is compared to *Literary* and each of the others. In

TABLE II
 PAGES DEVOTED TO DUPLICATED SELECTIONS BY ANY TWO OF THE FIFTEEN READERS

Names of Books	Literary	Aldine	Edson-Laing	Progressive	Carroll & Brooks	Rational	Baldwin & Bender	Riverside	Elson	Classic	Golden Treasury	Beacon	Nature & Life	Cyr	New Education
Literary	.....	3.5	1.5	3	7	3	0.5	1.5	1.5	6.5	0	0	0	0	5.5
Aldine	2.5	.....	4.5	0	0	0	1	0.5	4.5	1	0	0	9	0	5
Edson-Laing	1	2	.....	7	8	5	1.5	7	2.5	4.5	9	3	0	0	11.5
Progressive	5.5	0	7	.....	14.5	19	11.5	14.5	0	5.5	7	9	0	0	30
Carroll & Brooks	7.5	0	.....	.....	.....	17.8	7.3	10.5	2.5	13.3	2	11.3	0	0	12.5
Rational	5	0	6	6.5	15.5	.....	5.5	4	0	3	3	16	0	0	14.5
Baldwin & Bender	0.5	1	2.5	10.5	9.5	6.5	.....	7.5	1	10.5	7	2.5	3.5	0	6
Riverside	1	0.5	6	11.5	11.5	7	.....	.....	1	4.5	0	7	0	0	7.5
Elson	1.8	1.5	2.5	0	3	0	3	1.5	.....	18.8	8	6	3.5	0	3.5
Classic	6	1	3.5	4.5	12.5	4	11.5	4.5	17	.....	8	18.5	0	0	0
Golden Treasury	0	0	22	20	4.5	3.5	7.5	0	4.3	7	.....	8	2.5	0	20
Beacon	0	0	15.5	9.8	17.8	29.8	2.5	9.8	8	17.5	7.5	.....	0	0	18
Nature & Life	0	14.5	0	0	0	0	5.5	0	3.8	4.5	2	0	.....	0	9
Cyr	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
New Education	3	0.8	8	16	7	14.3	5.5	5	3	0	5	8.3	3.5	0	.....

the former case, that is, when *Literary* is compared to *Aldine*, it is seen that there are three and one-half pages of duplicated material, while in the latter case, *Aldine* compared to *Literary*, the number at the intersection of the columns shows but two and one-half pages. In other words, the three selections common to *Literary* and *Aldine* are given three and one-half pages in the former book and but two and one-half in the latter.

Table I shows two selections common to *Rational* and *Progressive*. On first thought one is inclined to regard such a small number of duplications as immaterial and unworthy of consideration. Table II reveals, however, that these two selections occupy nineteen pages in *Progressive* and six and one-half pages in *Rational*. A similar situation exists in regard to *Edson-Laing* when compared to *Beacon*. Follow the *Edson-Laing* horizontal column to the vertical column occupied by *Beacon*. The figure three indicates that *Edson-Laing* devotes three pages to material which is also found in *Beacon*. Now reverse the process, that is, follow the *Beacon* horizontal column to the vertical column occupied by *Edson-Laing* and we find that *Beacon* devotes fifteen and one-half pages to this same material. The three selections common to the two books occupy more than five times the amount of space in *Beacon* that they do in *Edson-Laing*. The most serious cases of overlapping occur between *Progressive* and five other books, *Classics* and four others, *Beacon* and five others, and *New Education* and two others.

While *Carroll & Brooks* occupies the distinctive position of containing the greatest number of duplicated selections, this honor, if such it may be, belongs to *New Education* when pages devoted to favorite selections are considered. This reader, published in 1901, devotes eighty of its one hundred twenty-one pages of reading matter to material which the authors of other readers, for the most part published later, have seen fit to incorporate in their own books. With such an array of favorite selections *New Education* surely should have retained a firmer hold on public favor, at least in so far as reading matter is a determining factor. That it has lost this hold may be in a great measure due to the psychological effect of the appearance of the printed page upon the mind of the reader. The type used in this book is small, the margins are narrow and the page has a tiring effect upon the eye.

Table II makes the selection of companion books a simple matter. Four books present no duplications with *Literary* and the overlapping with one or two others is so small as to be negligible. *Aldine* may be used with any one of six other books with no overlappings, *Edson-Laing* with either of two, and so on down the list.

It is not urged that under all circumstances should the selection of companion books be made with the single aim and view of avoiding duplications. Other factors need consideration. It may

TABLE III
PLACE OF OCCURRENCE OF A FEW OF THE FAVORITE SELECTIONS
FOUND IN THE FIFTEEN READERS. THE NUMBERS INDICATE
PAGES IN THE BOOKS

Names of Books	"Over in the Meadow"	"The Four Friends"	"The Three Goats"	"The Bell of Atri"	"The Lion and the Mouse"	"The Swallow"	"The Swing"	"The Wind and the Sun"	"The Ugly Duckling"
<i>Literary</i>					43	40		54	
<i>Aldine</i>									
<i>Edson-Laing</i>	71				26				135
<i>Progressive</i>		92	48						61
<i>Carroll & Brooks</i>	26	92	121		118		113	31	
<i>Rational</i>	45	132	39		90			31	
<i>Baldwin & Bender</i>	93					45	161		
<i>Riverside</i>		145	97			10			
<i>Elson</i>				80		64			
<i>Classic</i>	110		55	130			142		
<i>Golden Treasury</i>	12			69			84		128
<i>Beacon</i>	89	44		92					
<i>Nature & Life</i>									
<i>Cyr</i>									
<i>New Education</i>		92						19	151

even be advisable under certain conditions to seek for duplications. It may be desirable to secure a book of an entirely different type, for instance, the matter-of-fact or true-to-life type may well be supplemented by the imaginative type. This information the writer has not attempted to include in the present article, though he fully appreciates its significance.

It is interesting to note the particular selections which are such general favorites as to have found a place in a considerable number of the readers studied. While the greater part of the duplicated

material consists of folk-lore, the greatest favorite is Wadsworth's simple little poem "Over in the Meadow." This selection, as may be seen by reference to Table III, is found wholly or in part in seven of the fifteen books. Grimm's "The Four Friends" occurs under various titles in six of the readers; "The Three Goats," under four different titles, is in five of the books; and Anderson's "The Ugly Duckling" is in four.

TABLE IV
THREE FAVORITE SELECTIONS COMPARED AS TO LENGTH AND TITLE

Name of Selection	Reader Where Found	Pages Devoted to	Number Words Used
"The Four Friends".....	<i>Beacon</i>	9.8	1,150
"The Four Friends".....	<i>Carroll & Brooks</i>	6.0	893
"The Robbers".....	<i>Progressive</i>	9.0	922
"The Town Musicians".....	<i>Rational</i>	4.0	772
"The Town Band".....	<i>New Education</i>	4.5	1,054
"The Donkey and His Company".....	<i>Riverside</i>	7.0	512
"The Bell of Atri".....	<i>Beacon</i>	3.5	501
"The Bell of Atri".....	<i>Golden Treasury</i>	4.5	687
"The Bell of Atri".....	<i>Elson</i>	5.0	828
"The Bell of Justice".....	<i>Classic</i>	5.5	810
"The Ugly Duckling".....	<i>Golden Treasury</i>	20.0*	3,119
"The Ugly Duckling".....	<i>Edson-Laing</i>	7.0	897
"The Ugly Duckling".....	<i>Progressive</i>	7.0	652
"The Ugly Duckling".....	<i>New Education</i>	5.0	1,079

*About seventeen additional pages are devoted to exercises on this tale by *Golden Treasury*.

All told, seventy-seven selections are duplicated somewhere in the fifteen readers. Were this overlapping confined to readers of the same grade the problem would be infinitely more simple. "The Ugly Duckling," mentioned above, is also found in four of the nine third readers now on the writer's desk. It complicates the matter still more to know that eight of these nine readers belong to the same series as the ones here studied. The real extent of overlapping is as yet an undetermined matter. A fourth reader belonging to one of these series contains eight selections found in the second readers included in this investigation. It is evident that there is an utter lack of agreement or a complete disregard of gradation for difficulty among authors of school readers.

It is the present intention of the writer to carry the investigation farther and to publish the results in the form of a monograph

should interest seem to justify such an expenditure of labor. Other and later books may be added, thus covering practically the whole field. Suggestions and criticisms are courted that the study may be made profitable to supervisor and pupil alike.

As contributory evidence of the statement that versions or adaptations of a story vary, the writer has appended Table IV in which three of the favorite selections mentioned in Table III are compared. Comments on the findings here shown are unnecessary save to remark that other duplicated selections represent similar conditions. It is obvious that a study of the table of contents of a reader will not reveal the extent of overlappings.